

Taking the Shield of Faith, Quenching the Fiery Darts & Standing for God: How Did the Battle Go This Week?

Ephesians 6:16

God Says Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth

Satan is alive and well on planet earth today.

As Prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), his silent army of demon invaders swirl through the air. Around us lurk those infernal warriors of the Kingdom of Darkness.

These are not science fiction aliens.

Rather, as super strong extra-terrestrial intelligent beings, their aim is clear.

Their shocking strategy is so powerful, normal humans would pale if aware of it.

These twisted demon hordes are even more deadly than a terrorist's attack.

They are locked on course.

Their target is the human mind, the control center of every human being on the planet.

The Battle is Raging Today

The demon attackers find resistance only from those **armed** with the armor of God, **clothed** with the Spirit of God, and **disciplined** as soldiers of God in the kingdom of light.

Today we are enemies to Satan and his hosts.

To even speak of this dark world of evil, invites great and inexplicable difficulties.

Today, as this truth from God's Word is taught you may experience strange and powerful turmoil. Our faith in Christ assures us though, that we are "more than conquerors through Christ."

As we learn and grow today, we will find Satan is a defeated foe, a weakened adversary, and crushed enemy. We have the victory.

We All Are Targets for Attack

Each day as you and I awaken, and walk out into life: we face an ambush.

Unseen demonic enemies are tracking us to shoot and wound us.

They are armed and ready to unleash fiery arrows with deadly accuracy.

There is only one defense: The Shield of Faith.

That is our focus in God's Word today:

Taking the Shield of Faith, Quenching the Fiery Darts & Standing for God:

How Did the Battle Go This Week?

That is the message Paul delivers to us in Ephesians 6:10-17.

I will be reading the translation of this passage by J.B. Phillips, whose rendering of the Greek language really helps us feel the fight around us.

Please stand and listen to God's Voice as I read His Word:

"In conclusion, be strong—not in yourselves but in the Lord, in the power of his boundless resource.

Put on God's complete armor so that you can successfully resist all the devil's methods of attack. For our fight is not against any physical enemy: it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil.

Therefore you must wear the whole armor of God that you may be able to resist evil in its day of power, and that even when you have fought to a standstill you may still stand your ground. Take your stand then with truth as your belt, righteousness your breastplate, the Gospel of peace firmly on your feet, salvation as your helmet and in your hand the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Above all be sure you take faith as your shield, for it can quench every burning missile the enemy hurls at you"

Pray

The Key to the Battle

As we open to Ephesians 6:16 we come to the keystone of the armor that we are studying. There are six pieces of spiritual armor described by Paul. Verse 16 is the longest description and the only place where the actual details of the battle are described for us. Note with me how v. 16 is different.

- v. 10-14a: Sober Charge to Readiness for *surviving the Warfare*
- v. 14b: Piece-1, the **Belt of Truth**.
- v. 14c: Piece-2, the **Breastplate of Righteousness**.
- v. 15: Piece-3, the **Shoes of Peace**.
- v. 16: Piece-4, the **Shield of Faith** plus the *description of the actual warfare*.
- v. 17a: Piece-5, the **Helmet of Salvation**.
- v. 17b: Piece-6, the **Sword of the Spirit**.

Note that this section of Ephesians starts with a large description of how much we need to be ready, and how many foes we face as believers. Then it gives the armor. But within v. 16 is the only description of the actual form of the attack that we face.

The Warfare, The Armor & the Wicked One

<p>Ephesians 6:10-17 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual <i>hosts</i> of wickedness in the heavenly <i>places</i>. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.¹⁴ Stand therefore</p>	<p>14b having girded your waist with truth, 14c having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16a above all, taking the shield of faith [**] 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;</p>	<p>** 16b with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one</p>
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Shielded by the Missile Defense of Faith

Paul defines which of the Roman shields he was talking about with the word *thureos*.

This was the battle field shield of the Roman Legions.

Measuring about 30-inches-wide x 60-inches-high, this shield was like a door-sized-wall for soldiers to stand behind. Made of pieces of wood, leather and metal, it was a defensive wall that kept arrows, spears, and rocks from harming the soldiers.

Often enemies added a pitch soaked cloth, wrapped around their arrows that were ignited as it was shot. Without this shield the impact would not just deeply wound and burn the soldier, but the flaming splatters of fiercely burning pitch would light on fire anything they landed upon.

The *thureos* shield deflected or extinguished each arrow.

Often at the end of battles the Roman soldier's shields looked like smoking porcupines as their shields bristled with all the extinguished arrows of their enemies.

Facing the Spiritual Terrorists Daily

Each day we walk through life Satan's dark realm has well placed archers, arrows ignited and ready to shoot.

Impure thoughts are a flaming arrow that the shield of faith can extinguish.

So are the flaming darts of anger, pride, fear, despair, covetousness, jealousy, and every other well aimed fleshly temptation.

If Satan's team lands an arrow (as we saw in his attack on Eve in the Garden) the impact and splatter of his fiercely burning pitch can ignite within our minds **doubts** about God's goodness, **distrust** about God's plan, and **disobedience** to God's Word.

Doubts, distrust, disobedience. That's Satan's simple goal.

Satan wins if he can make this flaming dart start a wedge between us as believers, or between us, and our Father.

Only the shield of faith, (holding onto the truth of God and acting upon it even when it is unseen), can extinguish these flaming arrows.

Take up the shield today, because without that shield, it is impossible to please God.

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) But without faith *it is impossible* to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

What is the Shield of Faith?

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The faith that the Shield of Faith refers to is not that every day, practical faith we live by, like when we flip a light switch or turn a faucet handle.

The Shield of Faith is that supernatural faith that saved us by grace.

It is faith in Christ alone.

It is believing God for Who He is, as revealed in His Word.

Biblical faith is not blind faith, rather it is infinitely powerful faith that is focused and fixed upon Jesus Christ.

Faith is only as powerful as its object.

Our faith is sure because of the True and Living God in whom we trust.

He is the object.

He is powerful.

Our faith is empowered, supplied, and protected by Him.

Only the Shield of Faith can extinguish Satan's fiery darts.

What are the Fiery Darts?

Every day we are bombarded by the forces of the darkness of this world.

Each believer faces an arsenal of wickedness shot by a skilled warrior that has been ambushing humans for thousands of years.

The arrow choices at the disposal of the realm of darkness exactly match every way that the god of this world has found to attack us humans.

At any moment Satan can send our way:

Darts to enflame immoral desires.

Darts to spark a smoldering fire of hatred.

Darts to ignite us into flaming anger.

Darts to swallow us into the shadows of doubt.

Darts to consume our hearts with covetousness.

Darts to swell us with pride.

Darts to plunge us into fear.

Darts to tip us over into despair.

As John MacArthur likes to say:

“Every temptation, either directly or indirectly, tries to get us to doubt or distrust God. The purpose of Satan's missiles is to cause believers to forsake their trust in God, to drive a wedge between the Savior and the saved. Put up the shield of faith and that won't happen to you.”

How Do We Use the Shield of Faith?

Each of us are infected with lusts that can be ignited instantly by Satan.

Even the smallest spark can start a roaring fire.

We can get ignited by filthy arrows of degraded passions, or polished arrows of rationalizations. Both work so well.

If the arrow infected with adultery won't work, then Satan tries the rationalizing arrow. Kent Hughes reminds us:

“If God didn't want me to have this, then why did he make me with such a desire for this thing, this person, this pleasure? My neighbor has it. He does it. And he is doing so well ...”

But in that moment of temptation we can grab our shield of faith. God's Word speaks to our hearts:

“You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Exodus 20:17).

“It is God's will that you should be holy; that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable ... For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 4:3–8).

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things” (Philippians 4:8).

The moment we believe God, and agree with His Word, our Shield of Faith rises, the flaming dart crumbles, extinguished into ashes.

Just like C.S. Lewis used to say:

“We must pray for the gift of Faith, for the power to go on believing not in the teeth of reason but in the teeth of lust.”⁷

Shot When We are Down

Satan also like to shoot us when we are down with all of the hard times life will send.

When we face illness, when we enter tragedy, and when we face persecution a whole new set of darts are used.

When facing trials, the Kingdom of Darkness shoots arrows that ignite doubts about God's Goodness. Or arrows that enflame fears about God's existence, or the reliability of His Word, or even whether He is even right or just.

We can see this up close in the Garden with Eve.

Satan shot her with the “Has God really said not to do that?” arrow.

Then he shot the “Is God really good if He keeps you from enjoying that?” arrow.

Then he shot the “God wouldn't really punish someone for that would He?” arrow.

⁷ C. S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, “Religion: Reality or Substitute” (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1941), p. 43.

We know the result, we all were plunged into sin.

Those arrows work unless we raise the Shield of Faith.

Every temptation to sin always comes down to believing God's Word or believing Satan's lies. Which will you choose today?

God Says	We Face	Satan Says
Trust My Wisdom	Pain	God isn't really Good
Trust My Love	Sorrow	God doesn't really Care
Trust My Timing	Temptation	God doesn't understand your Needs
Trust My Presence	Loss	God's not strong enough to Protect you
Trust My Power	Sickness	God's not really in Control
Trust My Plans	Lust	God doesn't really want me Happy

We Do Not Face the Battle Alone

Did you notice that every reference to us as believers in in v. 10-17 is in the plural?

The verbs and pronouns point to us together. We all face the same battles; but we all face them together.

The Lord is saying through Paul that we are not to look on spiritual warfare as something we face alone.

We can only win in community with other believers.

When we gather with believers we are to talk about God's Word, His promises, and His work in us. Why? Because of the combination of:

Our Words & Jesus' Power

We were designed to operate best inside a Christ-shaped community of believers. The description of warfare is that it is a shared, personal battle. This is most pronounced as we look at the Shield of Faith. We must carry and use our own shield, but others around us can hold us our arms.

Just like Moses needed his arms held up by Aaron and Hur so that Joshua could lead Israel to win the battle (Exodus 17:8-16), so we need one another. How do other believers help us? By speaking faith-stirring, and hope-building words that feed our souls.

In two of the clearest passages in Hebrews, God calls each of us as believers to encourage those around us.

Hebrews 3:12-13 (NKJV) Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 **but exhort one another daily,**

while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 10:24-25 (NKJV) And let us **consider one another in order to stir up love and good works**, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, **but exhorting one another, and so much the more** as you see the Day approaching.

Did you catch that?

As members of Christ's Body we are to be:

Connected, Communicating & Caring

The Body of Christ is designed to be connected, communicating, and caring. We are to speak the truth to each other empowered by the Spirit of God. Our words can exhort, our words can encourage, and our words can correct. As John Piper likes to say—

“and the Holy Spirit breathes upon what is otherwise babbling to effect real devil-defying faith in our lives. This kind of speaking is a glorious staple of gospel-shaped community. And Satan wants you to have no part in it”.

The spiritual battle raging around us is designed to isolate us.

Satan wants the swirl of battle to separate us from other believers who can challenge and encourage us with God's Word.

Then, we can get swallowed-up in the storms of our own soul.

Like a wolf picking off the weakest in the flock, Satan's plan is to separate us from the flock so he can devour us.

Stay Connected, Keep Communicating & Never Stop Caring

Resist the temptation to isolation.

Break into someone's life with words from God's Word.

Reach out and see the wiles of the devil frustrated in their life, and yours.

When we speak God's Word there is power, not from us but from Him who is the Word.

Jesus has destroyed the power of the Devil (Heb. 2:14).

Jesus destroys every work of the Devil He is confronted with (1 John 3:8).

When we love Jesus, we love His family.

Church is the gathering of Christ's family.

Come. Speak the truths of the Gospel of Christ. Remind yourself and all around you that nothing and no one can snatch you or them (John 10:28-29); or separate you or them (Rom. 8:35-39), from Christ's love.

As believers, who walk in the Spirit as Paul said we are to do, we walk through life clothed in the protective gear God designed just for us; and we walk through life in community with those around us making sure they too are making it through the battle.

We are not alone. We are part of a family.

We help each other through the battles of life.

We All Are Targets for Attack: Use the Shield!

Each day as you and I awaken, and walk out into life: we face an ambush.

Unseen demonic enemies are tracking us to shoot and wound us.

They are armed and ready to unleash fiery arrows with deadly accuracy.

There is only one defense: The Shield of Faith.

That is the message Paul delivers to us in Ephesians 6:

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We Learn Each Piece of Our Armor is Vital

1. **Belt of Truth** (v.14a) Vital to every soldier was this belt from which all tools of battle hung. This belt also held the soldier's robe together. To the Christian soldier a belt of truth means that we are surrounded by "honesty," "truthfulness," "integrity," and "sincerity" that every part of our life is governed by truth. **Dishonesty brings defeat!**
2. **Breastplate of Righteousness** (v.14b) The soldier's breastplate was a heavy piece of armor that completely surrounded the body. To the Christian soldier this means a pursuit of personal, daily righteousness. We learn confession and repentance of sin can only maintain this. **Impurity will bring defeat**, so say no to sin daily.
3. **Shoes of Peace** (v.15). The sandal soles of the soldier were impregnated with heavy, spike-like hobnails, which gave him a good footing, and also kept him safe from stepping on sharp objects. If you injure a soldier's feet he's out of commission. To the Christian soldier this piece of armor is a call to both "readiness" and "peace of mind." If our hearts are not kept in peace by Christ, then **anxiety will bring us defeat!**
4. **Shield of Faith** (v.16). To a Roman soldier, his shield was a portable metal-banded wall, which he hid behind in battle. It was 5 feet high, 3 feet wide and served as the deflector from the flaming darts of the enemy. Our Shield of faith extinguishes all the flaming missiles of the evil one. But **doubt will bring defeat!**
5. **Helmet of Salvation** (v.17a). A soldier never was far from his helmet. Nearly any object on the battlefield could immobilize a soldier if his head was unprotected. So to the Christian soldier the meaning of the helmet is assurance of salvation. A Christian who is not assured that he has salvation is just totally immobilized because he's unsure about everything. He's unsure about God's promises, His Word, His protection. He's unsure about his destiny, his purpose in life. **Lack of assurance brings defeat!**
6. **Sword of the SPIRIT** (v.17b). Quick and deadly was the sword of a soldier. Vital to any victory was the hand-to-hand combat, which ended in the defeat of the enemy. To the Christian soldier this victorious sword comes only through a personal command of the Scriptures. This is essential to effectiveness in battle. **Neglecting the Word breeds weakness and will bring defeat in our lives.**

The Five Key Truths of Spiritual Warfare

There are five key passages on spiritual warfare, and each of them has a very specific message for us to apply. As we turn to each one and read the verses, note the lesson and apply it, by the power of God's Spirit, in your life.

JESUS said to resist Satan we must—**USE GOD'S WORD**. In Matthew 4:1-11 we saw that God's Word works, Jesus even used the Old Testament to defeat the Devil!

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, **but by every word** that proceeds from the mouth of God.' "

PAUL said to resist Satan we must—**USE GOD’S WEAPONS**. In Ephesians 6:10-17 we see that our spiritual weapons are not human inventions or works, as Paul wrote:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 **For the weapons of our warfare are** not carnal but **mighty in God** for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

JAMES said that to resist Satan we must—**LIVE SUBMISSIVELY in God’s sight**. In James 4:7-10 we see submission to God precedes any resistance of the Devil.

James 4:7-10 Therefore **submit to God**. [is first and then, and only then can we] Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

PETER said to resist Satan we must—**LIVE HUMBLY in God’s sight**. In I Peter 5:5-9 we see that God calls us to clothe ourselves with humility before we resist the prowling Devil.

1 Peter 5:5-9 Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” 6 **Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God**, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 **Resist him, steadfast in the faith**, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

JOHN said to resist Satan we must—**LIVE HOLY in God’s sight**. In I John 3:7-9 we see how powerful a pure life can be, and how disabling impurity can be.

1 John 3:3, 8 And everyone who has this hope in Him **purifies himself**, just as He is pure. 8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might **destroy the works of the devil**.

As we’ve already seen, our spiritual immune system is laid out in Scripture as having three factors: **spiritual health** (eating and drinking in God’s Word, plus exercising each day by walking in the Spirit); **spiritual armor** (understanding and uses the armor Paul commands us to use in Ephesians 6:10-18); and **spiritual warfare** (resisting the devil and his demons). If you neglect any part of your spiritual immune system—Satan and his army have a point to step up their campaign.

The Shield of Faith

The Roman soldier had two kinds of shields. There was a small round shield that he would use in hand-to-hand combat when it was important for him to be able to maneuver easily, and there was a large oblong shield that he would use when advancing into battle with other soldiers. This second shield, the one Paul refers to here, was about four or four-and-a-half feet long and about two feet wide, and covered the soldier's body completely. So when the soldiers advanced in rows, as the Romans did, the enemy was faced with a solid wall of shields—row upon row of them. These advancing columns of a Roman army were called phalanxes, and they were the terror of Rome's foes.

Paul is saying that our faith should be like that. It should do three things: (1) it should cover us so that not a portion is exposed, (2) it should link up with the faith of others to prevent a solid wall of defense, and (3) because it covers our entire person and links up with the faith of our fellow soldiers, it should be able to strike down whatever fiery arrows the enemy hurls at us.

You have noticed, I am sure, that when Paul speaks of this item of armor he does not say “the shield of *the* faith” as if he were referring to the specific teachings of Christianity—he has already included that in his reference to truth as the Christian's belt—but rather to “the shield of faith,” meaning a general confidence in God. Our shield against Satan's arrows is this kind of faith, faith that God can be trusted. It is knowing that when God says that he is able to keep us from falling and present us before his presence with exceeding joy, he means exactly that and will do it. We do not need to fear when we advance into battle. God will go with us and will bring victory.